

## The Press **PLUS**

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# Features

Hull 1/6

**YESTERDAY RECALLED** — A longtime Pascagoula resident, Dr. Edgar Hull, holds up a copy of the *Mississippi Press* Yesterday edition in the yard of his beachfront home. He has shared some of his memories by commenting on several of the articles and photographs in that publication.





# Yesterday

## Pas doctor recalls 1921 fire, old theatre, early

By EDGAR HULL, M.D.

Special to the Press

Let me presume to comment on some of the articles and photographs in the "Mississippi Press" Yesterday edited on the basis of my own memory, as I say presume, because the memories of the elderly — I was born in 1904 — are apt to be faulty. Everyone's memory for past events is spotty and never continuous — and these facts, contrary to popular opinion, are wider in old people.

Further, frequent recounting of past happenings may lead to exaggeration and/or distortion.

### THE GREAT FIRE

In June 1921 more than 50 buildings were destroyed on a windy Sunday afternoon. The fire began in a bakery on the south side of Delmas Avenue (where young red-headed Malcolm Canty perished) and spread to destroy every building on Delmas Avenue from Pascagoula Street to Canty Street and beyond and on the

west side of Pascagoula Street as far south as Jackson Avenue. Sparks from the fire ignited and destroyed two Negro houses on what is now Live Oak Avenue.

Among the buildings destroyed were the Warfield Theatre, Hughes' dry goods and millinery store, Casanova's "fireproof" dry goods store, Thompson's general merchandise store and Remeke's grocery store.

The Warfield Theatre was the tallest building in Pascagoula due to a high portion which housed the scenery used in stage plays. It was almost directly across Delmas Avenue from the bakery. The theatre was built and owned (I think) by a member or members of the Frederic family. (I cannot spot the Warfield in any of the photographs in

Yesterday.) Traveling road companies used to come to the Warfield. I remember seeing *Buster Brown*, *Peck's Bad Boy* and *The Irish Fifteenth* (the last a musical comedy drama. I can still sing the chorus of one of the songs — *My Mother's Wedding Ring*.) During World War I some tawdry vaudeville groups performed at the Warfield. Once I had the dubious honor of guiding a bearded sharpshooter to the Warfield. In his performance, using a mirror and with his back to the "volunteer," he shot a piece of



Old Palace Pharmacy

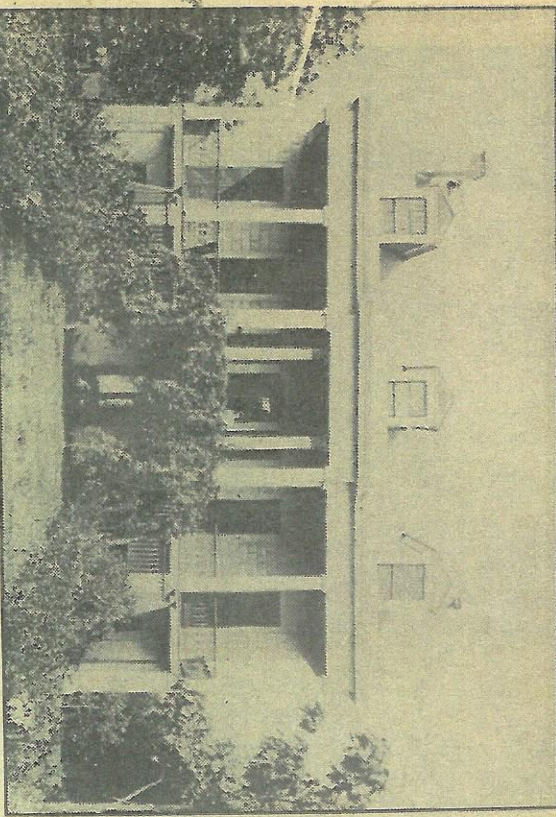
chalk held in the mouth of a Negro lad. At the Warfield we also had — I remember — a hypnotist and a magician.

The Warfield was also the first movie theatre, showing one and two reel films, 15 minutes each. Since there was but one projector — operated by hand — you had to wait a

minute or so between reels for operator to change to the next. One of my favorite films was a — *The Perils of Pauline*, starring Pearl White; each episode ended with Pauline in a most perilous situation, keeping us in suspense a whole week. Other stars I remember were Theda Bara, I Pickford and Douglas Fairbank.

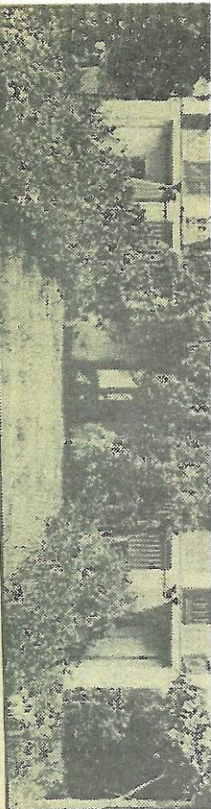
Louise Glaum and William S. I *Birth of a Nation* (circa 1916) did come to Pascagoula; we saw it away Biloxi.

Casanova's "Fireproof" Store just west of the bakery. Mr. Casanova refused to remove the merchandise because the store was built of brick. Heat destroyed the contents and the walls collapsed. Mr. Casanova was a normally proportioned dwarf, no more than 4½ feet tall; his wife was of no



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minute or so between reels for the operator to change to the next one. One of my favorite films was a serial — *The Perils of Pauline*, starring Pearl White; each episode ended with Pauline in a most perilous situation, keeping us in suspense for a whole week. Other stars I remember were Theda Bara; Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks; Louise Glaum and William S. Hart. *Birth of a Nation* (circa 1916) did not come to Pascagoula; we saw it in far away Biloxi.

Casanova's "Fireproof" Store was just west of the bakery. Mr. Casanova refused to remove the merchandise because the store was built of brick. Heat destroyed all of the contents and the walls collapsed. Mr. Casanova was a normally proportioned dwarf, no more than 4½ feet tall; his wife was of normal height, but their only son was no taller than his father.

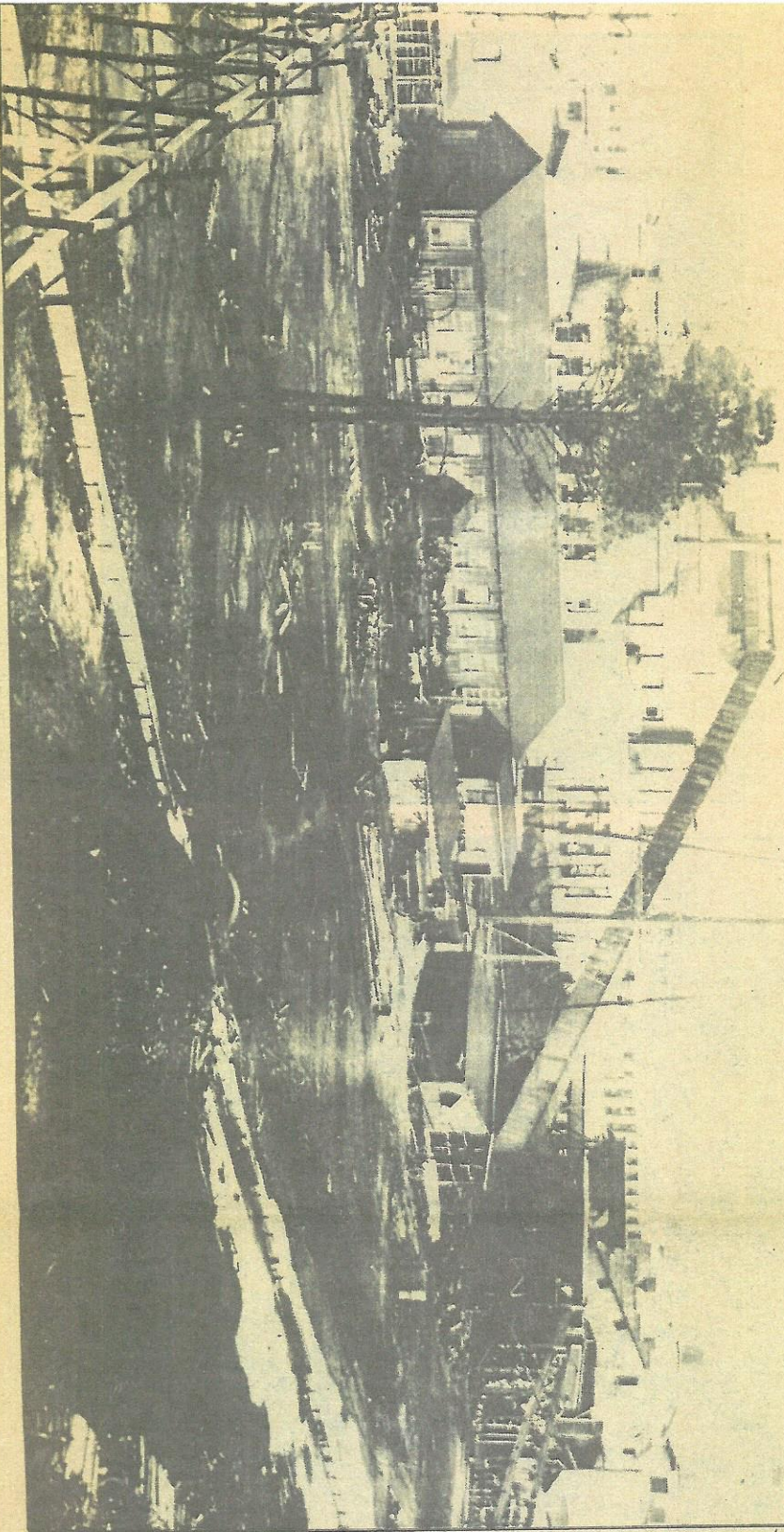
Hughes' Store was a two-story building on the northeast corner of Delmas Avenue and Pascagoula Street. The family — W.D. Hughes, his red-headed wife Susie, and their son Foster (called Billy) lived upstairs.

Thompson's Store was a large raised building on the southwest corner of Delmas Avenue and Cauty Street; you had to go up several steps to reach the front "gallery" of the store.

Rieneke's Store was on the west side of Pascagoula Street just north of Jackson Avenue. It was the largest grocery store in Pascagoula at the time.

#### NEWSPAPERS

During my childhood and early adolescence there were two weeklies in Pascagoula: the *Pascagoula Chronicle*, edited by Mr. Scott, and the *Democrat Star*, edited by Mr. Sparkman. The Scotts lived in the house now occupied by an orthodontic clinic, on the corner of Pascagoula and Dupont Avenue. They had a beautiful and popular daughter named Margie. The Scott



International Paper's Moss Point Mill circa 1915



# Doctor recalls Pascagoula events

(Continued from Page 10)

house was built in the 1850s by a Mr. Graham. During my childhood it was owned by Mr. Pollock, and later by his two daughters — Olive Pollack and Elise Pollock Moore; the latter was the mother of W. H. "Pie" Moore. The house was then called Bellevue. It was sold to Frank Carty, who in turn sold it to Ingalls. I have a notion that the present name was the brainchild of Walter Lewis (a son of F. H. Lewis), who may have got the idea from Longfellow's poem *The Building of the Ship*. It is not likely that Longfellow ever saw

Section G  
P. 10.  
The Old Central School building (photograph), also known as Pascagoula High School, was where I entered school in 1910, and graduated in 1920, where Mac Morgan was principal and Mr. Walker was superintendent of city schools — all three of them. There were 15 in my graduation class. Commencement exercises were held in the Warfield Theatre. Mr. Winfield, who had previously been superintendent, was the commencement speaker, at request of the class  
Section H

"Pascagoula's sunny bay."  
P. 8. The photograph of the Palace Pharmacy must have been taken in the early 1920s. Dr. S. B. McIlwain came to Pascagoula about 1920.

Dr. W. R. Kell was never called William by Pascagoulians. His middle name was Richard.  
P. 11. (Photograph of houses)

House #7 was built by Pedro Jane' (younger brother of Edmond J. Jane') who married Dora Nelson. Edmond and Pedro had a younger sister named Aimee', who never married. I don't know whether she ever owned the house.

House #8. The R. A. Farnsworths also had a summer house on the beach. This house, now 903 Beach Blvd., is still one of the most attractive homes in Pascagoula.

Mr. Farnsworth owned the coal chute, where tugs and other steam-powered vessels refueled. It was located a short distance north of

P. 2. (Photographs).

The Horn Island lightstation — known as Horn Island Light — was built after the old lighthouse (photographed on page 3) was destroyed in the great 1906 storm. The photographs on pages 2 and 3 seem (to me) to be of the same building, which, as the caption on page 3 correctly states, was located inside Petit Bois Island near its west end. Two men, one was named Bailey, lived in the lighthouse and tended the light. There was a gasoline-powered dingy which carried them (one at a time) to and from Pascagoula. The site is still marked by a lighted buoy which warns of the rocks placed under the lighthouse when it was built.  
P. 4. (photographs and captions)

The International Shipbuilding shipyard was also called Piaggio's



Trolley line runs along Giffin Street in Moss Point



steam-powered vessels refueled. It was located a short distance north of the railroad bridge. The chute's wharf was a favorite swimming place for boys. Large sheephead could be caught under the wharf.

## Section F

Photographs pages 6 & 7. The route of the trolley line (called street car line) begins (if you will) on Farnsworth Avenue at Anderson Park (we called it Paquette's Park); east on Farnsworth to Pascagoula Street; north on Pascagoula Street to Krebs Avenue; west on Krebs Avenue to just beyond Magnolia Street; turn at handstand north of L&N freight station; east on Krebs Avenue to Pascagoula Street; north on Pascagoula Street-River Road and Main Street Moss Point to Griffin Street; west on Griffin Street to Dantzier's sawmill; same route south.

Fare from Pascagoula: beach, a nickel; Moss Point, a dime; Dantzier's, 15 cents.

The "Longfellow" open car was used not only for excursions to Paquette's Park, but also for funerals at Greenwood Cemetery.

P. 10. (*Chronicle Star* story of Oct. 29, 1954)

The first highway bridge across the West Pascagoula River was built some years before 1927. The cable ferry across the East Pascagoula River began to operate only after construction of the "old" bridge and a road which led from the bridge to the ferry landing. The landing on the East Side was located at the foot of Live Oak Avenue. The road had seven bridges and for a time Pascagoula was advertised as "The City of Seven Bridges."

The International Shipbuilding shipyard was also called Piaggio's because it was owned by Mr. Piaggio, who also built a palatial home on the beach between Biloxi and Gulfport. The first ships built at Piaggio's were wooden five-masted full rigged ships; only later were steel cargo ships built. Long before, there was a seafood cannery on the river at the mouth of Community Bayou; it was deserted but still standing during my childhood; the rest of the site was then wilderness. The photograph was probably taken in 1919 or 1920.

The Dierke-Blodgett shipyard was located immediately north of Live Oak Avenue, on property now owned by Robert Warren and the heirs of the late Clafin Warren. The ship which still exists was dug by Dierks-Blodgett and marked its northern boundary. A railroad spur ran on Live Oak Street — called Mud Avenue by my uncle — from the Pascagoula Northern Railroad (later Mississippi Export) to the shipyard. Sparks from the locomotive set our home on fire in 1918 or thereabouts. Even before Dierks-Blodgett boats were built on this site; I remember one ocean-going tug named Rey del Rio that was built there.

P. 7. (Photograph 4) Becht's Ferry.

This was the only way to move an automobile from Pascagoula to Gautier before the Old Bridge (section F, page 10) and the seven-bridge road was constructed. The ferry was propelled by the launch Helena (also shown) which was tied to its left side. I made the round trip once, as a "hitchhiker."

## Fire takes toll on Krebs Avenue in the early 1900s



The route was as follows: from ferry landing at Becht's wharf (at foot of Live Oak Avenue) up river to Bayou Chamois, called Bayou Chemise; west on Chemise into West Pascagoula River; thence down river to Gautier landing a short distance above railroad bridge; then east through canal on north side of railroad to Pascagoula River and back to Becht's wharf. Looking back, I believe that the much shorter route was possible because the tide had risen.

Incidentally, Mr. Becht also had a barber shop on Krebs Avenue. His wife may have been named Helena. The helmsman in the photograph is not Mr. Becht.

P. 8. I believe that the photograph of the "old lighthouse on the West Bank ..." was probably taken after the 1906 storm. The lighthouse which I remember had no light, served only as a home for the man (and his family) who refueled the beacons which marked the channel, and which burned day and night. It was located a considerable distance below the site of the present grain elevator.

P. 9. The Scranton Courthouse was located to the west of Magnolia Street. Immediately to its east was

the county jail. The courthouse was built of red brick; only much later was it painted white. Part of the fence now stands in front of the house at 803 Washington Ave.

Churches — The old Presbyterian Church (#2) stood on Canty Street, southwest corner of Convent Avenue; it was the only brick church in Pascagoula. The Women's Club Center (#7) was originally a non-denominational Protestant church serving the residents of South Pascagoula.

C. E. Walker (photograph) lived before my day; I remember the building as Francis Saucier's studio. One wonders whether Mr. Walker was the first to name a business (or office, or mall or what not) for the river which did sing until it was dredged during World War I. The "mysterious music" was heard best on calm nights at the mouth of Delmas Bayou, which was condemned to make way for Ingalls West Bank yard; but the music was audible underwater a considerable distance up and down the river.

P. 11 (Photograph) W. M. Canty Store and Post Office.

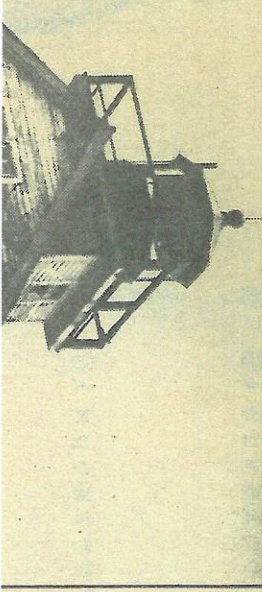
This goes back before my day, but I believe that I recognize the building as Horace Hinds' store.

John Y. Morgan's Livery Stable (photograph) was also before my day. The first — and only — I remember was Jim Blackwell located on the east side of Magnolia Street (then Kerr Street) just west of the railroad.

P. 12. The Electric Light and Power Plant (photograph) built still standing and is in use — course, additions. The plant provided power for the street line. The car barn was located north of the plant. The plant furnished ice as well as power.

We had electric lights in our house as far back as my memory goes. South Pascagoula did not get electricity until the 1920s.

Physicians — Until about 1900 there were only two physicians in Pascagoula — Dr. Kell and Tabor, although before my day were Dr. Evans who lived in house which is now 3000 Pascagoula St. Dr. Cox, who lived at now 510 Pascagoula St. Dr. home, demolished only recently on the west side of Pascagoula just north of its intersection Telephone Road; the Dr. Ta home, restored and still in use at 620 Live Oak Ave.

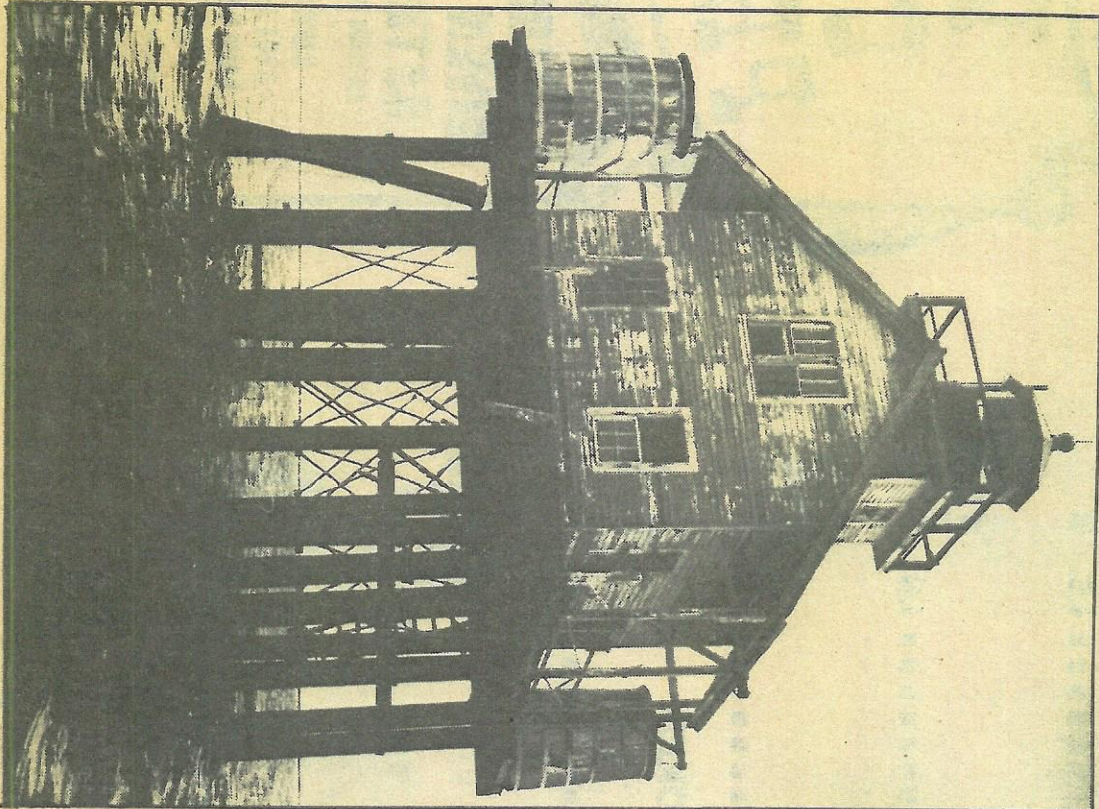




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Horn Island Light station

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Electric Light and Power plant, now Pasiced and Freezer Co